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O C U L U S

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NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
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PUBLIC RELATIONS

Here is a long persisting evil affecting public relations. Many newspapers and magazines publish alleged construction costs in connection with presentation of private houses. Often the figures do not even approximate the truth. In many cases, a check up of floor areas and cubage indicates as wide a discrepancy as 100 per cent or more. Even occasional items in architectural publications betray this fault.

One result of this misinformation is its effect upon potential clients. Time and again architects are confronted with the offending items as proof that approximate estimates of cost rendered are padded. The inference drawn by the client is that the particular architect in question doesn't know his job. Often, the incident leads to the loss of the commission. The natural conclusion drawn by the client is that when costs are published they are factual.

It would seem that some action could be taken by the Chapter to reduce such inaccuracies to a minimum. It is plainly a job for the Committee on Public Relations, but the membership can help in these two ways to formulate a plan: (1) by suggesting methods to combat the fault; (2) by sending in such flagrant examples of underestimate as come to their attention.

In the N. Y. World-Telegram of October 21 there appeared an article and a drawing of a parish school. The drawing was labelled "an architect's sketch." Since this incident was only one in a long chain of omissions, a letter of protest was sent to the editor. Here, in part, is his answer:

"I appreciate your desire to get the architect's name listed with each building. However, I think we have got to use reason. I am willing to try to use

the names of architects when the buildings are of sufficient importance to warrant such usage. In the case of the United Nations buildings we have mentioned the names of the architects, but I do not see doing it for every building that is put up in this area.

Lee B. Wood, *Executive Editor*."

There is a challenge in Mr. Wood's reply. The inference is that neither the architecture nor the architect is of any importance per se, and that mention, when made, would be only incidental to the prominence achieved by some structure in the public eye. This is exactly the sort of thing we need to combat in order to publicize architecture, to convince the public that all buildings need architects, and to let it be known who they are.

Contrasted with the attitude of Mr. Wood is the reaction of Mr. Stephen Thompson, of the N. Y. Herald-Tribune. Many months ago, a letter of protest resulted in immediate cooperation and names were published consistently. Recently, a Sunday issue slipped. A follow-up reminder again brought gratifying results in the edition of the very next Sunday.

The Oculus is interested in knowing about any members' articles appearing in publications of any kind. Please advise us of the title, publication name, and date of issue. We'd like to tell others about it.

EAST MIDTOWN

Your attention is once more called to the excellent report of the Civic Design and Development Committee, called *East Midtown Manhattan*. This booklet, containing over 50 pages of maps, diagrams, air views and an analysis of the possibilities of redeveloping the area surrounding the U. N. site, is now available at the Chapter Office. The cost to members is 50c per copy; non-members are charged \$1.00.

REGIONAL PLAN CONFERENCE

On Monday, November 16, there will be an all-day Regional Plan Conference at the Hotel Roosevelt. Registration starts at 9:00 A.M. on the mezzanine floor. The registration fee is one dollar.

Morning and afternoon will be divided into two sessions each. The text of the first morning session will be Organizing for Area Planning. The second morning session will be on the subject of Making Zoning Work for the Community. The first afternoon session will deal with Planning Suburban Land Development. The finale will be based upon Recreation for our Expanding Population.

The various aspects of the subject matter will be presented by some 15 speakers, all persons of note in their respective fields, and each representing a different locale. After the discussion period a technicolor film will be shown titled: *Parkways for New Jersey*.

THE CONVENTION

A country club four miles back of Albany was the scene this year of the State Architects' Convention, just closed. The building itself, low and rambling, left much to be desired architecturally, but once inside one was immediately confronted with an impressive showing of architectural achievement throughout the State, flanked by handsome exhibits of the manufacturers.

Delegates were housed in various hotels in Albany and transported to the Club in buses for each day's sessions. Holding a convention at the end of a bus line has the advantage of keeping the delegates from wandering—there was no place to wander to except the commercial displays, the architects' exhibit or the bar. The result was a concentrated interest in all aspects of the well planned program, for which

thanks are largely due to Henry Blatner, the hardworking but unruffled Chairman of the Convention.

Seminars on schools, architectural training, industrial architecture and the multiple dwelling law were well attended. There were events for the ladies in which your reporter did not participate but which were said to be thoroughly enjoyable.

The annual banquet, complete with rare roast beef and baked Alaska, was attended by 269 members and guests—35% more than anticipated! Among the guests were the Mayor of Albany, the State Superintendent of Public Works, Bertram D. Tallamy, our own C. J. White, State Architect, and John White, Jr., Field Secretary of the A.I.A. Ralph Winslow, presiding over the occasion with dignity and humor, called on Ralph Walker as principal speaker for some architectural impressions of cities visited in his recent travels through Europe and South America.

At the shore dinner the following night, the steamed clams, corn and chicken were topped off by a lobster apiece. This impressive fare offered the delegates did not dull their appetite for lively discussion at the business sessions. A proposal to amend the Education Law to provide that all structures in the State be planned and supervised by a registered practitioner (doing away with the present exception of structures under \$10,000. or 30,000 cubic feet) provoked too much discussion for unanimous agreement and was finally referred to the Legislative Committee. Our own Chapter's resolution urging state-wide legislation to cover minimum provisions against fire hazards in residential buildings throughout the State was unanimously carried. The Convention went further and broadened the recommendation to include light, air and ventilation, also sanitation. Harry M. Prince, who conducted the discussion on the Multiple Dwelling Law, assured his audience that the New York legislators have grown to respect the opinions and recommendations of architects; it behooves us, therefore, to weigh our words when making recommendations to the Legislature.

Unification was furthered by a unanimous vote to join the A.I.A. as a State organization member, with a special committee appointed to iron out the details of dues, representation, etc.

The Staten Island Chapter proposed a resolution to ease the tax burden on owners of property which has been earmarked by the City for possible future streets. Owners of such property are barred from developing it, but

meantime are held liable for the annual taxes. This proposal brought out some interesting points of view. The long-range planners in the audience held that this is small sacrifice to make for the future orderly development of a community. Others felt it was a matter of individual concern which did not call for action by a state-wide body of architects. One member asked if this was a taxpayers' convention or an architects' convention. However, the majority deprecated this attitude as being shortsighted and not accordant with today's broader social consciousness. Noticeable throughout all discussions of the delegates, in fact, was a growing sense of responsibility towards the community as distinct from their own personal problems or interests.

A limited number of Certificates of Merit were awarded to the Architectural Exhibition although judging was somewhat hampered by the fact that in some cases plans did not accompany the drawings. New York winners were Alfred Hopkins & Associates for the Gun Hill Housing project, Moore & Hutchins for the New York State School of Industrial & Labor Relations at Cornell, Voorhees, Walker, Foley and Smith for their Fresh Meadows project and York & Sawyer for the Veterans' Hospital at Washington.

Association officers elected for next year were C. Storrs Barrows, President, James S. Whitman, 1st Vice President, Irving Seelig, 2nd Vice President, E. James Gambaro, 3rd Vice President, John W. Briggs, Secretary and Maxwell Cantor, Treasurer.

The convention is invited to Rochester next year.

A BID FROM BRITAIN

The following invitation has been received from the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Dear Sirs: I am sure your members will be interested to know that, at the invitation of the Nottingham, Derby and Lincoln Architectural Society, the Council of the R.I.B.A. have decided to hold the annual conference in 1949 in Nottingham. The Conference will take place from the 29th June to 2nd July 1949, and a very interesting programme is being arranged. We are always glad on these occasions to have the company of visitors from the United States and if any of your members are likely to be in Europe at that time I hope they will communicate with me so that I can send them copies of the programme.

C. D. Spragg, Secretary
R.I.B.A. 66 Portland Place,
London, W. 1.

PHILADELPHIANS' VISIT

On Saturday, October 16, a busfull of visitors from the Philadelphia Chapter toured Manhattan by arrangement with the N. Y. Department of Parks and under the guidance of Mr. John Haslip, representing Commissioner Robert Moses. After arriving in a special car of the Reading R. R. the group visited our Chapter exhibit at the Museum, the Battery Tunnel, the city's east-side asphalt plant, the U. N. site and headquarters and a number of new housing projects. President Sleeper welcomed the visitors at luncheon at the Town Hall Club.

The Philadelphia architects, including their Chapter President, Mr. Louis McAllister, were accompanied by wives, draftsmen, students, engineers, a representative of the Reading R. R. and two members of the Philadelphia Planning Commission. Mr. Beryl Price, Chairman of the visitors' Special Activities Committee, was in charge of the outing.

TILE MANUFACTURER'S DINNER

Some 140 members, hungry for technical information and for the accompanying filet mignon dinner, attended an evening meeting on October 19 at which the Tile Manufacturers' Association, through the courtesy of Edwin Bateman Morris, A.I.A. showed colored pictures of the manufacture of various kinds of tile.

Mr. Morris, with amusing anecdotes, stressed the importance to architects of a thorough knowledge of materials. Kenneth Gale, design manager of the Mosaic Tile Company, Zanesville, Ohio, described the manufacturing processes illustrated. This kind of opportunity for architects to learn the details of a complex manufacturing process is indeed to be welcomed. Through such familiarity, both the aesthetic and economic aspects of design can be improved.

For example, during the discussion period which followed the picture, the architects present, by a vote of 130 to 6, favored the use of the natural run of color in tile, instead of tile meticulously and expensively sorted for utmost uniformity. Despite the opinions of architects the mass demand for the uniform product makes a change in the procedure impracticable from the manufacturer's point of view. This should be a challenge to the profession. Does the public taste really differ so from the professional? Perhaps it is the competing tile companies who have sold the public in the past on the idea of uniformity. Would it not be to the advantage of all concerned to convert the public to a kind of tile

which besides being simpler and less expensive to manufacture is, in the opinion of architects, more aesthetic? This is indeed a field where architect, manufacturer and public relations expert could work together for the advancement of both the profession and the trade.

Quite aside from aesthetics, the manufacturers might well avail themselves of the architects' analytical approach to manufacturing problems. After the meeting a number of comments were heard about the complexity of the processes illustrated. These are of course the result of long and slow evolution as the machine replaced hand methods bit by bit. Although the expense of redesigning a plant completely in accordance with the latest mechanical developments would be considerable, it might be well for manufacturers to encourage and even pay for observation and analysis of their processes by competent architects!

While welcoming every opportunity, such as this meeting, that makes architects more familiar with the work of manufacturers, let us not be backward in making known our own desires and capabilities. In this way the interests of the profession can be advanced and the standards of public taste improved.

"STATION WAIA"

On October 26, new members were given an indoctrination of martinis and manhattans. The occasion was the annual cocktail party of the Chapter, to which members and their wives turned out in force.

By way of exploring the possibilities of a Student Associate branch in the Chapter, a group from the Columbia School of Architecture had been invited to the party. The students (11 boys & 1 girl) seemed keenly interested in the proceedings and pleased at the opportunity of meeting and talking to practicing architects who, up till then, had been only names to them.

President Sleeper inaugurated our own network WAIA (115 on your dial!) with a broadcast of welcome to the new members who were paraded before the mike and introduced. The president also voiced the thanks of the Chapter to Eleanor Pepper, Chairman, and all members of the Exhibition and Public Relations Committees for their herculean efforts in connection with "Tomorrow's World."

The proceedings were then turned over to Miss Dorothea Waters, who, in fitting words, presented each worker with a token of the Chapter's gratitude.

BUILDING AWARDS RESUMED

The Chamber of Commerce of the Borough of Queens has resumed its annual awards for the design and construction of buildings according to president Frank S. O'Hara, Jackson Heights realtor.

The awards will be made for excellence of plan and construction of buildings erected in Queens between 1942 and 1948. Bronze plaques will be presented to the owners of buildings in fourteen classifications and the architects and building contractors will receive certificates. The Queens Chamber has sponsored the competition since 1926.

The awards will be presented at the Queens Chamber's annual dinner at the Hotel Commodore on December 7. The Building Award Committee consists of architects, Simeon Heller, chairman, Arthur Allen, Benjamin Braunstein and Raymond Irrera, civil engineer William L. Savacool, and Alfred N. Warwick, president of the construction firm of Eugene F. Warwick, Inc.

The awards, which were suspended during the war, are being resumed to stimulate better design and construction of buildings in the borough.

SWEDISH DESIGN

Dean Richard F. Bach, of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, informs us that on Saturday, November 27, at 3:00 P.M., Sven Erik Skawonius will speak at the Museum on "Swedish Design: 1917 to the Present." Mr. Skawonius is Director of the Swedish Society of Arts and Crafts, and his talk should be of interest.

MEMBERS IN PRINT

Our fellow-member, Morris Ketchum, Jr., is the author of *Shops & Stores*, a recent addition to the Progressive Architecture Library issued by the Reinhold Publishing Company of New York. He has presented a copy to the Chapter Library.

The book contains some 302 pages of text, profusely illustrated. It begins with a brief review of the past history of the subject, particularly as manifested in this country. The main body of the work opens with a detailed analysis of the planning problems involved and proceeds to an exhaustive technical discussion of equipment and materials. The remaining half of the volume is devoted to the study of merchandise display, to a comparison of the general types of shops and stores, and to questions of shopping environments, — all with much searching reference to psy-

chological, sociological, and economic factors. The concluding chapter deals with the architect's duties and opportunities and offers some useful suggestions as to the maintenance of happy relations between architect and client.

The author points out that recent conditions have been favorable mainly to the development of the smaller type of shop, but the broader problems involved in the design of large emporia are not neglected. At the outset he deprecates "a current tendency to use overly decorative backgrounds and trick architectural effects in a desperate search for novelty," noting the necessity, however, for some small trickery in drawing the attention of the buying public to "impulse" merchandise.

Mr. Ketchum's text, even where technical, provides exceedingly pleasant reading and the illustrations are absorbing throughout. Although many of the drawings and photographs show the work of other architects, the large proportion representing the author's own work clearly indicates his extensive experience in the field. Though building materials and methods may develop in divergent ways which we cannot now visualize, there is no doubt that the principles enunciated in *Shops & Stores* will always be of fundamental value.

THE CATCH BASIN

Many of us have had jobs of such character as to call for a grand opening to the public. On the day set, the architect presents his engraved invite and nears the premises with pardonable pride induced by the knowledge of work well done. The feeling is short-lived. That transparent gossamer screen staggers under the weight of a horseshoe of roses proclaiming GOOD LUCK. Streamers flutter from the acoustical ceiling. The main motif is completely obliterated by red, white and blue bunting, demonstrating that even patriotism can be carried too far.

In anticipation of such possible desecration, perhaps clients can be convinced to consult their architects before calling in the flower and flag man. A quick sketch might bring realization of how such decoration should be designed to complement the architecture. To prove the point it might help to show the client a photo of a sweater girl with emphasis in the wrong places. In addition to the aesthetic aspect there is also the practical consideration of insurance against spiked flashings, pierced mortar joints, and cracked plaster.

CHARLES K. HIRZEL

INDIA CALLING

From the office of Edmund R. Purves, A.I.A., Director of Public Relations in Washington, comes word of a request from the Embassy of India. A team of competent town planning experts is required by the Government of East Punjab, in working out a plan for the new capital city of this province created by the partitioning of India. The site and other details are described in several pages of notes available for inspection in Miss Waters' office.

All those interested should send applications to Mr. T. S. P. Ram, Second Secretary, Embassy of India, 2107 Massachusetts Ave. N. W., Washington, D. C.

CANDIDATES

According to the By-Laws of the Chapter, names of candidates for membership shall be submitted to all members before consideration by the Committee on Admissions. Information received regarding the qualifications of the following candidates will be considered confidential:

Corporate Membership:

1. Charles K. Agle
Sponsors: William F. R. Ballard
Henry S. Churchill
2. Harry L. Brumond
Sponsors: William E. Delehanty
Randolph Evans
3. Vincent Furno
Sponsors: William F. R. Ballard
Morris Ketchum, Jr.
4. Bernard William Guenther
Sponsors: Charles B. Meyers
William F. R. Ballard
5. Bernard Johnston Harrison
Sponsors: William F. R. Ballard
Morris Ketchum, Jr.
6. Russell Mertens Krob
Sponsors: Percy Cashmore
Charles W. Beeston
7. Nelson Bush Mead
Sponsors: George T. Licht
John W. Waterbury
8. John Donald Tuttle
Sponsors: Henry Otis Chapman
Randolph Evans

Associate Membership:

1. Walter W. H. R. Jones
Sponsors: Joachim Accurso
Perry Coke Smith

ADDITIONS TO CHAPTER LIBRARY

Mrs. Morris Sanders has presented to the Chapter a collection of books consisting of approximately 150 volumes from the architectural library of her late husband.

Included are about a dozen folios and quartos devoted to line drawings of classic and Renaissance buildings, a large number of more or less standard

works on all types of recent architecture both in this country and abroad, and many books and magazines covering interior design and decoration over the last quarter century.

The Chapter is deeply indebted to Mrs. Sanders for this material. It is particularly desired that our library contain the publications of members, as well as certain standard works of reference. This gift contributes to these categories since it includes copies of Chester Price's renderings of *Ten Country Houses* by Delano and Aldrich and of the *Kidder-Parker Handbook*, neither of which had hitherto been received.

A BLUEPRINT FOR BLUEPRINT USE

Before you discard that old set of blueprints, why not re-examine them to see whether or not they may serve some useful purpose? For example, the Education Committee is seeking blueprints for transmission to local drafting schools. Prints will serve as models of architectural drafting techniques. They need not be for a complete building. By exhibiting the work of your star draftsmen you will show students what our drafting objectives are.

There are many drafting schools in our community and hence many prints are needed. Please dust them off now and send them to Chapter Headquarters, attention of Ben John Small, Chairman, Education Committee.

LICENSING BUILDERS

A bill is pending in the New Jersey Assembly providing that no one except property owners upon their own property, licensed architects, engineers, and land surveyors, may operate as a building contractor or engage in the business of erection or alteration of any building until he shall have been licensed by the Commissioner of Labor. Qualification requirements will include endorsement of two reliable builders, literacy, at least 3 years of construction experience, and posting of a surety bond. If this bill becomes law, it might have an echo in other states. There have been several unsuccessful attempts since 1912 to license builders in N. Y. State.

NEW STAFF

The members of the Editorial Committee on Public Relations are also the personnel of the Oculus staff. Here are the names of the new committee members for this year.

Ronald Allwork
Philip G. Bartlett
Charles K. Hirzel
William B. Hornblower
Edward E. Post
Samuel A. Scoville
Mortimer E. Freehof, Chairman

O SAY CAN YOU SEE

A dinner meeting on November 30 promises to be of unusual interest. Dr. Darrell B. Harmon will speak on his own special technique of adjusting the entire environment of school children for better seeing. He will analyse the physiology of sight, the effect of various factors on the beholder and the many things that can be done about it.

Dr. Harmon is a physician whose accomplishments in the schools of Texas have awakened the entire country to a better understanding of seeing as an architectural problem. He will present not only theories but statistics based upon extensive controls. His findings have a bearing on every kind of building in which people use their eyes.

FELLOWSHIPS

Upon the recommendation of the Chapter's Committee on Fellows, the Executive Committee has approved the names of eight Chapter members for advancement to Fellowship in the Institute.

Accordingly, nominations, together with supporting data, have been forwarded to the AIA Jury of Fellows, for the following men:

Frederic Rhinelander King
John C. B. Moore
William Platt
Louis Skidmore
Harold Reeve Sleeper
A. Stewart Walker
Lawrence Grant White
Frederick James Woodbridge

Supporting letters from fellow-members on behalf of candidates for this high honor have proven in the past to be a definite factor in election to fellowship. You are therefore urged to write to the Jury of Fellows of the AIA, Octagon Bldg., Washington, D.C. on behalf of anyone on the above list whom you know personally and who you believe should be so honored by the Institute.

CATALOG COMPETITION

A competition, sponsored jointly by the Institute and the Producers' Council, offers Architects an opportunity to voice their opinions on the type of descriptive literature which best serves their needs in selecting and specifying building products.

Members are urged to send to Lessing W. Williams c/o Geo. B. Post & Sons, 101 Park Avenue, before December 10 (the deadline) their selections of intelligently presented advertising material.

The actual brochures or catalogs need not be forwarded providing sufficient detailed information is supplied to permit their identification and the securing of copies from the source.